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ABSTRACT

This practicum addressed the problem of eighth grade students repeatedly being referred to the school administration because of their disruptive behavior. The maladaptive behavior resulted in diminished student academic performance and adversely affected the students' self-esteem. A group counseling program was implemented which focused on values, self-esteem, interpersonal relations, self-discipline, and the transition into high school for eighth grade students (N=71). Results showed that, for the eighth grade students as a group, parental involvement increased while the number of referrals for disruptive behavior and unsatisfactory grades decreased. The results suggest that a group counseling program, combined with increased parental involvement, benefits all students, not just those experiencing difficulties. The program can help reduce the number of referrals for maladaptive behavior, improve the students' self-esteem, and reduce the number of unsatisfactory grades caused by poor work and social habits. (Author/ABL)

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PRACTICUM REPORT

Center for the
Advancement of Education
Ed.D. Program

Using Group Counseling to Reduce Disruptive Behavior and Enhance the Self-Esteem of Eighth Grade Students

by

Norbert T. Bunish

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Using Group Counseling to Reduce Disruptive Behavior and Enhance the Self-Esteem of Eighth Grade Students

by

Norbert T. Bunish

Cluster XXIV

A Practicum II Report Presented to the Ed.D. Program
in Early and Middle Childhood
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

MAY 1989

PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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This practicum report was submitted by Norbert T. Bunich under the direction of the adviser listed below. IT was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

6/13/89
Date of Final Approval of Report

Georgianna Lowen (signature)
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ABSTRACT

Using Group Counseling to Reduce Disruptive Behavior and Enhance the Self-Esteem of Eighth Grade Students. Bunish, Norbert T., 1989: Practicum Report, Nova University Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Descriptors: Secondary School / Middle School / Self Control / Discipline Problems / Student Motivation / Self Concept / Behavior Modification / Group Counseling / Group Dynamics / Parent Participation.

This practicum addressed the problem of the eighth grade students repeatedly being referred to the school administration because of their disruptive behavior. The maladaptive behavior resulted in diminished student academic performance and adversely affected the students' self-esteem. The literature suggested a group counseling program would best address the problem.

The goals of the practicum were: (1) to reduce the number of incidences of maladaptive behavior by the eighth grade students, (2) to improve the students' self-esteem; (3) to reduce the number of less than satisfactory grades and checks for poor work and social habits on the students' report cards; and (4) to increase parent involvement in the education of their children. To attain the goals, the writer implemented a group counseling program that focused on values, self-esteem, interpersonal relations, self-discipline and the transition into high school.

The data indicated that for the eighth grade students as a group parental involvement increased, the number of referrals for disruptive behavior was reduced as were the number of less than satisfactory grades and checks for work and social habits on the report cards. The increase in self-esteem, while significant, did not meet the 20% success criterion. The results confirm that a group counseling program, combined with increased parental involvement, benefits all students, not just those experiencing difficulties. The program can help reduce the number of referrals for maladaptive behavior, improve the students' self-esteem, and reduce the number of less than satisfactory grades and checks for poor work and social habits on the student's report cards.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of the Community

The school in which the practicum was conducted currently has 672 students in grades kindergarten through eight. There are morning and afternoon kindergartens and three classrooms at each grade level with the exception of first grade which has two. Future growth of the student body is limited due to lack of classroom space. At one time the school had over 1200 students, but a special education diagnostic center now occupies a portion of the building.

Forty percent of the students are White non-Hispanic, 34% are Black, 23% are Hispanic, 1% are American Indian, and 2% Asian. Limited-English Proficient Students comprise 2.8% of the student body. The student attendance rate is 92.7%, while the student mobility rate is 15.6%. Last year the school retention rate was 2.4%. The socioeconomic make-up of the student body is quite diverse. Some students come from families whose homes are worth $400,000 to $500,000, while

others others live in federally subsidized housing. Fifty-four and a half percent of the students come from families eligible for free or reduced-price lunches as determined by the federal government. Parents' occupations include blue collar workers, skilled technical workers, various professions, the arts, news media, and politics.

The school's parent-teacher and neighborhood organizations are very active. They fund the school's music and art programs in which all students participate, sponsor field trips, and provide extra classroom materials. Parent volunteers and students from neighboring universities help tutor needy students.

Forty-two percent of the students come from areas outside the school's immediate neighborhood. They are bused to and from the school from all sections of the city. These students are either in the Permissive Transfer Plan or the Options Program. The Permissive Transfer Plan allows students to attend any school in the city as long as they enhance integration. The Options Program is a city-wide magnet program for academically talented fifth and sixth grade students. Selected students work individually with the Independent Studies Teacher to develop research and

presentation skills. The number of students admitted under both programs is carefully monitored to maintain racial integration. It is the policy of the school system of the city not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin, age, handicap unrelated to ability, or sex in its educational program or employment policies or practices.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

In kindergarten, the students are grouped heterogeneously for all subjects. In grades one through eight, the students are grouped homogeneously for reading and mathematics. They are grouped according to their previous teacher's recommendation and their scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. In the upper grades, above average students are channeled into gifted programs which provide preparation for a science and mathematics curriculum at college preparatory secondary schools. All the students above grade four follow a departmental schedule. The average pupil-teacher ratio is 30.

The administration consists of a principal, a full-time teaching assistant principal, and one

guidance counselor. The guidance counselor serves students at all grade levels, and this year is also responsible for handling discipline problems for the school.

The faculty is composed of 32 teachers. All teachers are assigned to classes based on their area of state certification. There are eight males and 24 females. Of this number, 21 are Caucasian, 10 are Black, and one is Hispanic. Twenty-three members of the faculty have taught 10 years or more, seven have taught 3 to 10 years, and two have taught one year. Twenty-two faculty members hold a master's degree or higher.

Special education resource programs offered at the school are moderate learning disabilities, with 42 students, and speech therapy with 29 students. Student eligibility for these programs is determined by state and federal criteria. One day a week, the school has the services of a psychologist, teacher-nurse, and social worker. An attendance officer provides services to the school two days a week. Additional ancillary staff are available through the subdistrict office as the need arises.

The writer is a product of the local school system in which he is presently employed, having attended both elementary and high school in the local system. The

writer has a Bachelor of Education Degree, Mater of Education Degree in administration and supervision, and a Master of Arts Degree in guidance and counseling. He has state certification in guidance and counseling and administration and supervision for grades kindergarten through 12, and state teaching certification for grades three through nine. The writer has taught in the local school district's gifted mathematics program for 14 years.

The writer has been employed by the local school district for 31 year, 29 at his present work location. For the last 15 years he has served as a guidance counselor while also teaching mathematics to gifted seventh and eighth grade students.

The writer coordinates the reading and mathematics programs, special education programs, testing programs, maintains the school records, is responsible for the school discipline, in-school suspensions, and purchases text books and educational materials. The writer has served on local and district education councils, principal selection committee, has been a union representative and delegate, and school pension fund representative.

The writer is active in educational organizations. Currently he is a member of an organization of

educators serving the metropolitan area in which his school district is located. In 1980 he received the distinguished service award from that organization, the only active teacher so honored that year. For the last four years he has been the treasurer of a city-wide counselor's organization. The writer is a member of Phi Delta Kappa, and has received an award from the Red Cross for 15 years of service.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

The eighth grade students were repeatedly referred to the school administration for disruptive behavior in the classroom and also while in other parts of the building. Last year, the general superintendent mandated all seventh and eighth grades to be departmentalized in order to provide more in-depth instruction by specialists in the various subject areas. All the upper grade students are now grouped by ability and each period move to various classrooms.

Prior to coming to the upper grades, these students were in self-contained classrooms with some movement for homogeneous reading and mathematics. The movement of students involved a relatively small number of students who were above grade level. Students who were in special classes were picked up from, and returned to, the classroom by the special education resource teachers.

There were no extra personnel to handle the

discipline problems. The building administrator was forced to spend an inordinate amount of time on discipline matters and was unable to properly function as the instructional leader of the school. The assistant principal is also the full-time physical education teacher and was not able to devote much time to discipline problems. The counselor was the only other person in the building without full-time classroom responsibilities and was assigned the duties of school disciplinarian. Due to the pressure of other duties, the counselor was not able to do more than react to crisis situations.

The problem was the eighth grade students were repeatedly referred to the school administration because of their disruptive behavior.

Problem Documentation

During the first 30 weeks of the previous school year there were 242 referrals for disruptive behavior, involving this year's eighth grade students, made to the school administration. These totals did not include individual contacts with parents made by classroom

teachers prior to a referral to the school administration. District discipline policy requires the classroom teacher to attempt to rectify the situation before referring the disruptive student to the school administration. However, there are serious, emergency cases that are referred directly to the school disciplinarian.

The upper grade teachers were polled as to what they thought was the most pressing school problem they would like to see rectified. They were unanimous in naming the discipline problem, as they felt it was the main reason why many of the students' grades and work habits tended to decline while they were in the upper grades.

The 71 students in the program received grades in 12 subject areas. At the end of the first three marking periods during the course of the previous school year, they received a total of 362 less than satisfactory marks on their report cards (see Appendix A).

The students were also rated in 14 areas entitled "Growth in Habits and Attitudes." Checks in any of these areas indicated a need for improvement. During a marking period it was possible for a student to receive a check in an area from more than one teacher. The students who were involved in the program received a

total of 1030 checks. Five areas of "Social Habits" received 295 checks and nine areas of "Work Habits" received 735 checks (see Appendix A).

Causative Analysis

Students being referred to the school administration for disruptive behavior is the result of several factors. One is that after being in protected self-contained classrooms, the students have not been able to adapt to the greater freedom and responsibility of a departmental program. They have not learned self-discipline. Simmons and others (1977, 1979) studied the effects of school structure and found that moving into a more-impersonal environment of the junior high school does affect the students' self-esteem.

Another cause is that maladaptive behavior is a way to mask low self-esteem. Trumbull (1987) stated that students with low self-esteem are more apt to be disruptive in the classroom. They see themselves as inadequate and unworthy, helpless, inferior, and incapable of dealing with everyday life. They lack the ability to tolerate and reduce anxiety.

In a study conducted in Florida, Myrick and Dixon

(1985) found negative attitudes and low self-esteem to be causes of disruptive behavior. Myrick, Merhill, and Swanson (1986) obtained similar results when they replicated the Florida study in Indiana.

A third cause is the students have not developed the interpersonal skills needed to deal effectively with the variety of problems which occur during the school year. Effective communication skills are lacking.

Loethen (1983) also believes that more effective communication is needed to reduce disruptive classroom behavior.

A fourth cause is that the students may have sensed uncertainty on the part of the faculty when the school had an interim administrator for much of the school year.

Lastly, there was not sufficient parent contact and participation in the affairs of the school. Parent involvement has been proven to be effective in improving academic performance and reducing disruptive behavior.

The Related Literature

Brown (1986) states that the nation has developed many institutions that are structured in such a way that the service providers do things for the children and rarely focus on children doing things for themselves. Self-reliance needs to be enhanced in children. According to Brown the areas of competence the individual must establish for optimum development of self-reliance are:

1. A sense of self should be established. People constantly pick up signals from the environment. Awareness is the first step in the conscious direction and control of behavior. Independent thinking must be fostered so students can give direction to their lives. Social independence is attained when the individual is not controlled by others.

2. A sense of self-worth and competence must be promoted.

3. Responsible, disciplined behavior must be instilled, as to be responsible is to be reliable. Values and standards must be established. Values give meaning to life's events and guide our actions.

4. Self-discipline must be established. The goal

of external discipline is to help the students learn how to achieve their goals so that dependence on others can be replaced by self-discipline.

Training to be self-reliant is based on:

1. Behavioral patterning. Brown believes "You become what you do" (p. 28). Therefore, parents, teachers, and significant others must arrange for children to behave in appropriate ways.

2. Expectation. Children are responsive to adult expectations, both spoken and unspoken. Children quickly learn what is expected of them and fulfill what is prophesied for them.

3. Modeling. Children closely watch the behavior or parents, teachers, and significant others.

Altmann and Firnesz (1973) favor a role-playing approach to influence behavioral change and self-esteem. They describe self-esteem as "A judgmental process in which an individual examines his performance, capacities, and attributes according to his personal standards and values and arrives at a decision of his own worthiness" (p. 276). This personal judgement of one's worthiness is expressed through the attitudes the individual holds toward himself and is overtly expressed through verbal and other visible behavior. Those with low self-esteem see themselves as

inadequate and unworthy, helpless, inferior, and incapable of dealing with everyday life. They lack the inner resources to tolerate or reduce anxiety,

The authors believe an individual having low self-esteem and inadequate self-evaluation skills may benefit by modeling the behavior and decision making process of an effective, assured, and competent individual. Learning how a competent individual deals with insults, failures, and anxiety and how he resolves ambiguities and makes decisions can provide a person with behavioral alternatives that will enhance self-esteem.

Their Decision Making Model included a story that was read at the beginning of each session and for which the students were encouraged to:

1. Define the problem. Students were encouraged to recall the dilemma. The counselor asked who was involved? How were they affected by the situation? How was the main character feeling and why?

2. Delineate the alternatives. Projection on the part of the students was utilized. They were asked to give several possibilities as to what would happen now.

3. Explore the alternatives. Positive and negative solutions and their consequences were explored. Volunteers then role-played the situations; several

enactments were utilized.

Matthews (1984,1986) studied the effects of relaxation training on preadolescents with behavior difficulties as well as with children without difficulties. The program was designed to help children manage stress. Audio tapes enabled the author to include a larger number of classrooms in the studies. Before and after each exercise, the students recorded their wrist temperatures as a measure of the relaxation state.

Students receiving relaxation training had fewer discipline problems than those who did not receive the training. Disruptive behavior such as cutting classes, fighting, and discipline referrals was reduced.

Trumbull (1987) used group counseling to reduce disruptive behavior and increase self-esteem. The sessions focused on values, self-discipline, self-esteem, communications, and interpersonal relations.

Progress was measured by using a self-esteem inventory and comparing the number of discipline referrals for the students involved in the program to the number of discipline referrals received during a comparable period of time the previous year. The standard of achievement of a 20% reduction in

discipline referrals and a 20% increase in self-esteem was not met for all students.

Loethen (1983) developed and implemented a counseling program to reduce disruptive behavior in the classroom, develop a more positive self-concept, and provide more effective communication in the classroom. The program stressed improving behavior in the areas of; general school behavior, completion of homework, knowledge and obedience of school rules, respect for authority figures, respect toward others, classroom behavior, knowledge of right and wrong, and hall behavior.

The number of discipline referrals for the students involved in the program was significantly reduced over the number of referrals for the same group over a comparable amount of time the previous year.

Myrick and Dixon (1985) agree with the literature which maintains positive attitudes toward school result in higher grades and higher scores on standardized achievement tests. Students with negative attitudes perform badly and also disrupt and/or distract others from learning effectively and become discipline referrals. They also point out that the subject area has been neglected and little information regarding studies is available in the literature. Most previous

studies concerning the topic were done with small samples and therefore of questionable value. They found a counseling program of six sessions of 30-45 minutes each did make a difference and affected student attitudes and behavior.

Myrick, Merhill, and Swanson (1986) found that students with negative attitudes in school have problems learning and create problems for others that prevent them from learning. Counselors working with classroom groups do make a difference. Group counseling sessions benefited all students, not just those with behavior difficulties. They held six sessions dealing with (a) understanding feelings and behavior, (b) attitude, (c) helping someone new to school, (d) making positive changes, (e) "I am lovable and capable," and (f) looking for personal strengths. Two additional sessions were used to administer inventories.

Activities included counselor-led discussions and small group activities using a go-around procedure in which each student had a turn to respond to the group topic. Sessions ended with a summary and student assignment. The program was first tried in Florida and replicated in Indiana. The authors concluded that developmental classroom guidance units do improve

student attitudes and behaviors. They indicate classroom group counseling sessions might be viewed as a first strategy for working with target students. They also believe there is a need to develop more counselor interventions for specific student populations.

Ammer (1982) worked with learning disabled and behavior disordered students in secondary grades. He was able to help the students improve their self-control and reduce their academic frustration. Self-reinforcement on the part of the students was a key element of the program.

Simmons and others (1977, 1979) studied the impact of school structure on the self-esteem of adolescents. They found that the transition from a traditionally structured, protected elementary school classroom into a more-impersonal junior high school environment did affect the students' self-esteem. White adolescent girls were more affected by the change than boys in general. Students found to be vulnerable before the change were more apt to suffer damage to their self-esteem.

Dobson, Campbell, and Dobson (1982) studied the relationship between children's self-concept, perception of school, and life change. They agree with the literature that establishing positive student

attitudes should be one of the school's important objectives. Positive attitudes toward school can: (a) increase the likelihood of children remaining in school, (b) encourage the development of a life-long commitment to learning, and (c) promote the advantageous use of school time and offerings.

Children's feelings of self-worth and attitudes are influenced by societal conditions beyond the control of educators. Our society is constantly changing, often faster than some humans are capable of absorbing.

Counselors and teachers must continue to personalize school experiences. Teaching the whole child is now more crucial than ever. Establishing a sense of purpose, learning to cooperate and work with others is what we must strive to instill in the students.

Miller (1976) designed an experimental reading program which emphasized positive self-concept and improving behavior. The thirty-week program included a control group. No significant differences were found between the experimental and control groups in reading competency, self-concept, or classroom behavior. However, correlations among the variables did indicate interrelations among reading, self-concept, and

classroom behavior.

Kincheloe (1985) studied the relationship between reading and self-concept. Positive self-concept is crucial to success in reading, which he describes as a holistic process involving the individual and his environment.

Students not achieving success must be provided with positive challenges. We must provide room for failure. The students must learn that failure is a starting point, not a stopping point. They must be taught to analyze problems and mistakes, renew efforts, and refocus energies.

Slaughter (1975) investigated the relation of parent-teacher socialization to achievement orientation and self-esteem. Low-income Black children in grades six to eight were involved in the study. Slaughter's longitudinal study found that the parent's emphasis on academic achievement, her aspirations for the child, her attitude toward school, and the stability of the home life all impacted on the child's school life. In addition, she suggests there may be influences other than parent-to-child or teacher-to-child affecting minority children's behavior, especially after the children have been exposed to formal schooling over a longer period of time.

Browne and others (1983) advocate helping students manage their own behavior. To do so effectively, the students learn about self-esteem and respect, communication and personal relationships, self-control, and effective behavior. Students must be made to understand that positive self-esteem and self-respect will enhance their lives.

Hiles and others (1971) advocate the use of a guidance/human relations approach with students in grades seven to nine in order to prepare them to meet the challenges of their teen years. Incorporated into the Social Studies Program, the course would include units on (a) basic human needs, (b) personality development, (c) character growth, (d) rules and self-discipline, (e) unique challenges of today's society, (f) social relationships, (g) boy-girl relationships, and (h) self-assessment.

Group dynamics was used by DeEsch (1980) with disruptive students. The groups were limited to five to seven members and the program lasted 9 to 12 weeks. Intake interviews were used to screen group members to determine if the disruptive students could assume responsibility for their own effective and active involvement. Specific goals for individuals were set. The disruptive students

were given an opportunity to assume responsibility for their educational experience and psychological development.

Cross and Hunter (1984) conducted studies for two consecutive years to determine the value of a counseling center in addressing the affective needs of disruptive secondary students. The center served students from throughout the school district. The program was designed to raise disruptive students' self-esteem, self-concept of academic ability, and internal locus of control. For both years of the study, statistically significant increases were noted in all three dependent variables.

Winger (1979) reviewed a program which used peer dynamics to reduce the incidences of destructive behavior among school-age youth. Research has shown the importance of peer group pressure in dictating the presence or absence of maladaptive behavior. Students were trained and supervised in a group interaction plan with other students to develop self-esteem and better communication skills.

Sorsdahn and Sanche (1985) cited polls indicating discipline to be the number one problem in our schools. Many administrators believe the classroom teacher is the one professional who can best provide preventative

or developmental counseling as a supplement to theraputic counseling. Teachers and peer groups play a crucial role in the development of the child's self-concept and social adjustment, and are the most powerful agents affecting positive change in the child's behavior.

The authors point out that their review of the literature has not made clear which structure and what process are best to prevent problematic behavior in the classroom. They believe the classroom meeting approach has advantages over individual treatment and other group counseling methods because: (a) problem behavior occurs in the classroom and in the students' interpersonal relationships, (b) the problem is addressed in the social setting it occurs, (c) intervention in the classroom can instill in the children a feeling of belonging to a caring, supportive group rather than being excluded from the classroom group to receive counseling, (d) the number of children receiving support can be increased and professional counseling help can concentrate on the most needy, (e) classroom meetings are a way to meet the demand that guidance and counseling is for all children and not just a select few, (f) classroom meetings can provide the teacher with a method of assisting students

in the development of their problem-solving skills.

Classroom meetings occured twice a week, with the first four weeks devoted to discussing feelings, friends and topics requiring imaginative skills. After rapport was establish, usually by the fifth week, real problems such as fighting, tardiness, theft, and poor behavior were introduced. The sessions would then alternate between discussion and treatment meetings.

Classroom meetings have potential not only as a technique for children with behavior problems, but also as a means of preventing problem behavior. It also is a very cost-efficient approach to providing more preventive counseling for large numbers of children.

Cannella (1986) reviewed current findings in the area of praise and reward. Some developmental experts and psychological researchers have hypothesized that using praise and concrete rewards can indeed be harmful to learning. Extrinsic forms of motivation could cause the individual to be motivated to learn but "Generally, rewarding a child for participating in an attractive learning task reduces future interest in the activity" (p. 297). When experiencing a reward, children tend to choose easy rather than challenging free-choice activities.

Praise can be beneficial if it yields positive

information (negative information reduces interest) about the student's abilities or competence. Care must be taken to tailor praise to the individual's needs and psychological make-up so that intrinsic motivation will be maintained and quite possibly advanced. The author cautions that while praise can serve as a social behavior control, it reduces intrinsic learning motivation and results in increased dependence on the teacher. In experimental low-praise classrooms, the students exhibited more persistence on task, self-confidence, and problem solving ability.

Stenson (1981) defined behavioral and educational contracts as therapeutic instruments that can be beneficial educationally and socially while also improving the self-image of the student. Contracts make it possible to monitor students with behavioral problems as well as involving them in setting their own goals and assuming responsibility for achieving them.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Statement of General Goals

Changing maladaptive behavior is extremely important for the students' immediate and future success. The first goal of this practicum was to reduce the number of incidences of maladaptive behavior by the eighth grade students. The literature has shown there is a relationship between proper classroom behavior and positive self-esteem. With this in mind, the second goal of the practicum was to improve the self-esteem of the eighth grade students. Improved self-esteem and a reduced number of incidences of maladaptive behavior should produce a better learning environment. However, a group counseling program in the elementary school cannot function in isolation. The classroom teachers were important to the success of the program. Their role in the on-going development and evaluation of the students was a key element of the program. The third goal of this practicum was to reduce the number of less than satisfactory grades and checks for poor work and

social habits on the students' report cards. The importance of the home-school partnership in the education of the whole child has been proven. Therefore, the fourth goal of this practicum was to increase the involvement of the parents in the education of their children.

Behavioral Objectives

A review of the literature which discussed means of improving maladaptive behavior indicated a number of approaches could be employed. The literature was in general agreement that some form of group counseling should be employed. The writer chose the first two specific behavioral objectives with this in mind. The third specific behavioral objective is a logical outgrowth of the first two specific objectives plus the involvement of the classroom teachers. The fourth specific behavioral objective brings the home component into the program. Consequently, the following behavioral objectives were chosen for this practicum.

Over a period of 30 weeks the eighth grade students will reduce the incidences of maladaptive behavior by at least 20% as compared to the comparable period of time of the previous year.

The self-esteem of the eighth grade students will show at least a 20% improvement as measured by the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale over a period of 30 weeks.

The eighth grade students will decrease the number of less than satisfactory grades, and the number of checks for poor work and social habits, on their report cards by at least 20% over a 30 week period as compared to a comparable period of time of the previous year.

The writer will personally contact at least 80% of the eighth grade students' parents three or more times during the course of the 30 weeks of the practicum.

Evaluation Instruments

The first objective of this practicum was measured by comparing the number of referrals for maladaptive behavior by the eighth grade students with the number

of referrals for a comparable period of time of the previous year.

The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale was used to measure the second objective of this practicum. The developers of the Piers-Harris Scale describe self-concept as being synonymous with self-esteem. The instrument was chosen as it focuses on the children's conscious self-perception and may be administered individually or in a group. The instrument yields an overall score and also provides the following "cluster scales:" Behavior, Intellectual and School Status, Physical Appearance and Attributes, Anxiety, Popularity, and Happiness and Satisfaction.

This practicum's third objective was measured by comparing the number of less than satisfactory report card grades, and checks for poor work and social habits, earned by the eighth grade students with the number earned for a comparable period of time of the previous year.

Due to the absence of "hard" data from previous years indicating the degree of parent contact with the school concerning their children's education, there was no standard to judge whether the fourth goal had been attained. For the purpose of this practicum, the writer considered the goal attained if throughout the course

of the practicum he personally contacted at least 80% of the parents of the eighth grade students three or more times.

During the course of an extended project, unexpected events occur. To record these events, their effect on the practicum, and any changes that were implemented, a daily log (Appendix B) was kept. At the end of each week, a summary of unusual events, problems and their solutions, pupil and teacher concerns, and successes and failures was compiled (see Appendix L).

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion of Possible Solutions

Remediation of students' maladaptive behavior is an important objective of the school. All the students' capacity to learn and to develop their talents and abilities are seriously affected by disruptive behavior in the classroom. Although there is a scarcity of studies dealing with maladaptive behavior of eighth grade students, a review of the literature suggested a number of methods and activities which counselors and teachers could employ to meet the needs of their students. Taking into consideration the population involved in this practicum, the writer chose to consider those activities and methods which could contribute to a quality program and whose implementation was feasible.

One possible solution, suggested by Brown (1986), was to train students to be self-reliant. To accomplish this one must provide training in the areas of: establishing a sense of self; building self-worth; and

establishing sound values and standards to instill responsible disciplined behavior.

Ammer (1982) analyzed each student's make-up in order to provide more individualized assistance. The students were then taught to stop, look, listen, and think before attempting a task.

Altmann and Firnesz (1973) favored the use of role-playing during group counseling sessions. Sessions were held once a week and concluded with an emphasis on self-evaluation. Students role-played positive and negative solutions to dilemmas and then discussed their consequences.

Matthews (1984,1986) used relaxation training to reduce stress and discipline problems. Daily 15 minute relaxation exercises were conducted in the regular classroom.

Most of the departmental teachers are not willing to devote a portion of their class time to relaxation exercises. The time they have to cover material assigned by the state and local district does not allow them to depart from their structured curriculum.

Trumbull (1987) used group counseling sessions to reduce disruptive behavior. The groups were limited to eight members and met for 12 sessions. Loethan (1983) also used group counseling but provided individual

counseling to some of the group members. The groups met for 30 sessions.

Myrick, Merhill, and Swanson (1986) used group counseling in the regular classroom to correct maladaptive behavior. Six sessions were devoted to developmental guidance units and two additional sessions were used to administer inventories.

Browne and others (1983) would help develop the students' socialization skills to help the students learn to manage their behavior.

Kincheloe (1985) and Miller (1976) used reading programs to emphasize self-concept and behavior improvement. Kincheloe emphasized a holistic approach, putting reading in a real-world context.

Hiles and others (1971) used a guidance/human relations approach with upper grade students as part of the Social Studies Program. Students had to examine their values and behavior and those of their peers.

It is unrealistic to use the classroom meeting approach or incorporate group counseling into the reading or social studies programs. The successful use of group discussions and activities depends upon the preparation of the teachers. Without proper in-service training in group counseling techniques, the teachers could become overwhelmed.

Slaughter (1975) advocates the use of parent involvement to enhance the students' academic achievement and self-esteem. Improved communication and regular parental participation in school affairs was fostered.

The parent/school partnership in the education of the students must be nurtured if a program to reduce students' maldaptive behavior is to succeed. The students must understand that their parents as well as their teachers expect them to conduct themselves properly at all times.

Winger (1979) used peer dynamics to reduce the incidences of destructive behavior among school-age youths. Students were trained and supervised in a group interaction plan. Peer modeling is an important component of the program.

Cross and Hunter (1984) successfully used a counseling center approach to help meet the affective needs of students with maladaptive behavior. Sessions were held with individual disruptive students from throughout the school district.

DeEsch (1980) used small group counseling with disruptive students. The students were interviewed and screened to see if a potential group member could benefit from the program.

Sorsdahn and Sanches (1985) favor the classroom meeting approach over other group counseling approaches. The teacher is able to provide service to greater numbers of students at one session.

Stenson (1981) found group counseling, used in conjuction with educational performance contracts, to be successful in dealing with behavioral problems.

The studies indicate individual and small group counseling does improve the self-concept of the disruptive students, decrease school conflict, improve academic achievement, and reduce the number of referrals to the discipline office. The writer would have preferred this approach however, scheduling difficulties, and the necessity of servicing all the eighth grade students, prevented him from doing so.

Description of Selected Solution

The remediation of disruptive behavior is necessary if the students are to develop to their fullest potential. A review of the literature suggests a number of methods and activities which counselors and teachers could employ to meet the needs of their students. To varying degrees, all the previously

discussed approaches to the remediation of classroom behavior would yield positive results. The writer chose those approaches which would yield the greatest results given the constraints of: (a) a departmental program, (b) large numbers of students (71 to 79 students), (c) lack of personnel, and (d) the variety of time-consuming duties for which the writer is responsible.

The students attended group counseling sessions each week with approximately 15 to 18 students per group. Due to the transiency of the school population, the exact number of students in the sessions varied from week to week. The 71 students described in this report are students who were in attendance last school year and for whom information regarding grades and conduct was available. A total of 79 students attended some or all of the sessions.

While half of a class was attending the counseling sessions, the other half was attending computer class. The counseling sessions focused on values, self-esteem, interpersonal relations, self-discipline, and the transition to high school.

Role-playing was one of the counseling strategies used as it afforded the students an opportunity to practice the behavior and decision making process of an

effective, assured, and competent individual. Negative responses and their consequences were also role-played and discussed.

The day before the students returned to school in September, the writer met with the departmental teachers to continue discussions begun prior to the summer vacation. The workshop included: (a) classroom procedures in general; (b) classroom procedures applicable to a specific subject area or classroom; (c) specific formats for written work; (d) school schedules and movement about the building; (e) school and district homework policy; (f) discussing means of holding a continual dialog between students, parents, and faculty; and (g) review of the District Unified Discipline Code.

There was daily contact with the departmental teachers. They concentrated on teaching the students the proper work habits needed to decrease the number of less than satisfactory grades on their report cards. The teachers also worked with the students to reduce the number of checks on the report cards for poor social habits and poor work habits. Progress was reviewed at scheduled biweekly grade level meetings, as well as during daily informal discussions with the upper grade teachers.

Parent involvement was part of the program. The first week of school, all parents were informed of the program via letter (Appendix C). Supplemental progress reports (Appendix D) were sent home at the mid-point of each reporting period (i.e. weeks 5,15, and 25 of the school year). There was provision for either the parent or teacher to request a conference. Failure notices were sent for any student receiving a failing grade in any subject area.

During the school open house in October, the writer and teachers met with the parents. At mandatory report card pick up time (at the end of week 10), the writer and departmental teachers also met with the parents. Additional individual contacts were made by phone, letter, or in-school conferences as the need arose. The above contacts were in addition to the normal parent contacts made as part of the high school articulation program.

Action Taken

The first week of school the writer met with the departmental teachers to work out schedules and strategies. The need to be consistent in expectancies

regarding school work and conduct was discussed. The sharing of proven techniques for implementing the above was a valuable part of the meeting. The writer was in daily contact with the teachers and there was a constant exchange of ideas and information. The students' progress in the classroom was monitored. Many parent contacts were set up as joint meetings with one or more of the teachers and the writer.

Letters were sent to all parents explaining the program and soliciting their participation. Throughout the practicum informal notes were used when contacting parents to provide information, respond to their queries, or invite them to conferences.

The Piers-Harris Scale was given to all students. Its purpose and types of information provided were explained to the students. The format of the counseling sessions was also discussed. By reviewing proper work habits, general school behavior, respect for each other as well as adults, and the school discipline code, the writer reinforced material covered by the departmental teachers.

The writer met with each counseling group once a week. Each student maintained a counseling folder. During the weekly sessions the writer used preparation for high school and college as well as career choices

as the vehicles to introduce and discuss values, attitudes, interpersonal skills, communication, self-discipline, and consequences for one's actions. All students were given the opportunity to come to the writer's office when they had a problem or when they needed "time out." The teachers were also given the opportunity to send students to the writer if they thought the students were having, or about to have, a problem.

The writer did not follow a rigid format with the groups in order to capitalize on their current interests and concerns. When the students were discussing a student from a nearby university who won a gold medal in the olympics, this provided an opportunity to bring in sportsmanship, dedication to the attainment of a goal, and being a good winner as well as a good loser.

Throughout the course of the practicum various methods were used to assess the group's needs. One unit resulted from five or six students expressing their concerns about the required eighth grade physical examination. Admittance to high school is not permitted without the physical. The tests the doctors would take and why they were needed was discussed. Normal growth patterns were studied and this helped to answer some of

the concerns of some of the late maturing boys and girls in the class. From this point we turned to proper rest and nutrition. The students kept a log of what they ate for a week. At the following meeting they paired up with a "buddy," assessed their eating habits and found strengths and weaknesses. Personal hygiene was next. Although most of the students are well-groomed, there are a few who need help in this area. Areas discussed were acne, deodorants, baths and showers, hair and dental care, and changing of clothing.

District-mandated classes on AIDS, substance abuse, and teenage suicide afforded opportunities for individual research and oral presentation as well as discussion. A major concern of many of the students was the spread of venereal diseases and AIDS through contact with the opposite sex. The possibility of contracting AIDS from casual contact with another child in school was a cause of great concern to many students. Additional moral dilemmas, patterned after those used by Kohlberg, were presented to the students to afford them the opportunity to verbalize their beliefs and values. Prior to state and district mandated achievement testing, "how to study for tests" was a well-received activity.

The majority of the class has started dating but a

number of the boys do not know how to approach a member of the opposite sex whom they like without risk to her life and limb. Discussions and role-playing were used to show ways of approaching a girl or boy for a first encounter. Proper manners on a date were also discussed.

During the weekly counseling sessions, the students preferred discussion and short survey instruments and questionnaires to "discover" their values, attitudes, preferences, and alternate ways to handle social situations and improve communication. They did not care for activities requiring text books and research and, to a lesser extent, role-playing.

There was student and parent contact as part of the high school articulation program as well as regular parent contact regarding all eighth grade student activities. Supplemental progress reports were sent home at the end of weeks 5, 15, and 25 and included possible failure notices. The writer met with groups of parents at open house and mandatory report card pick up day. Additional parent contacts by letter, phone, or school conference were scheduled as needed.

A log was kept to record any unusual events or problems and their solutions. After the first few weeks of the practicum there was little in the way of problems to contend with. The occasional rescheduling

of a group due to the writer's other school duties and responsibilities did not create problems. The students and teachers involved in the practicum were understanding and flexible.

At the end of the 30 weeks, the postimplementation administration of the Piers-Harris Scale was administered. The total score T-scores and cluster scale results for the group as a whole were shared with the students. Individual results were given to each student privately.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

The first objective of the practicum was to reduce the number of incidences of maladaptive behavior by the eighth grade students. Success was measured by attaining a reduction of the number of discipline referrals by at least 20% as compared to the comparable period of time of the previous year.

For the eighth graders as a group, the number of referrals for maladaptive behavior during the first 30 weeks of the previous year was 242. During the course of the practicum the number of referrals was 78, a reduction of 164 or 67.77%. Thus, the criterion for success set for the first objective was met. Table 1 summarizes the results of the comparison of the discipline referrals for the two years.

The second objective dealt with the eighth grade students improving their self-esteem as a result of their participation in the practicum project. The criterion for success was a 20% improvement in

Table 1
Discipline Referrals

Student No.	School Year 87/88	School Year 88/89	Amount of Change
1	0	0	0
2	0	1	+1
3	0	0	0
4	5	0	-5
5	5	1	-4
6	1	1	0
7	4	0	-4
8	5	2	-3
9	8	2	-6
10	14	8	-6
11	3	0	-3
12	1	0	-1
13	0	2	+2
14	4	0	-4
15	14	9	-5
16	9	2	-7
17	0	0	0
18	5	2	-3
19	2	0	-2
20	0	0	0
21	0	0	0
22	13	6	-7
23	0	0	0
24	3	0	-3
25	4	0	-4
26	0	0	0
27	5	0	-5
28	1	0	-1
29	3	1	-2
30	13	0	-13
31	5	2	-3
32	1	0	-1
33	7	3	-4
34	5	1	-4
35	0	0	0
36	0	0	0
37	2	1	-1
38	1	0	-1
39	4	1	-3
40	0	0	0
41	2	1	-1

Table 1
Discipline Referrals

Student No.	School Year 87/88	School Year 88/89	Amount of Change
42	3	1	-2
43	0	0	0
44	3	0	-3
45	10	2	-8
46	12	4	-8
47	1	1	0
48	2	1	-1
49	0	0	0
50	11	3	-8
51	3	0	-3
52	0	0	0
53	6	3	-3
54	3	0	-3
55	0	0	0
56	1	0	-1
57	0	1	+1
58	1	3	+2
59	3	2	-1
60	3	2	-1
61	4	0	-4
62	3	0	-3
63	1	3	+2
64	3	1	-2
65	4	0	-4
66	6	1	-5
67	3	0	-3
68	3	3	0
69	1	0	-1
70	0	0	0
71	3	1	-2
Totals	242	78	-164
Means	3.41	1.10	-2.31
Medians	3.00	0.00	-3.00
Percent reduction in the number of referrals			67.77

self-esteem over a 30 week period as measured by the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale. The mean total score T-scores on the pre and postimplementation instruments were compared. The authors of the assessment instrument believe that the use of T-scores gives a finer level of discrimination than stanines. The finer level of discrimination is justified when a relatively large number of responses is involved, as is the case with total scores.

A higher score on the "Piers-Harris" indicates higher self-esteem while lower scores are associated with lower self-esteem. The single most reliable measure (i.e. the one with the most research support) for the "Piers-Harris" is the total score. For the practicum group as a whole, the mean of the Total Score T-Scores on the pre-implementation instrument was 55.77, which corresponds to the 71st percentile. The mean post-implementation score was 61.37, which corresponds to the 87th percentile. The difference between the means was 5.60 or 10.04%. Therefore, the criterion for success for the second objective was not met. Appendix E summarizes the Total Score T-Scores for the pre and postimplementation instruments.

It was almost impossible for many of the students to attain a 20% improvement over their

preimplementation score as their evaluations of themselves were consistently high. The students involved in the practicum were very sophisticated and obviously distorted some of their answers in a socially desirable direction. Piers and Harris (1984) report children frequently distort their responses in a socially desirable direction and that this does not mean they are trying to mislead others. "Such distortion should not always be interpreted as pathological. The desire to 'look good' and say mostly positive things about oneself is common in most children...the absence of such distortion may indicate as much a problem as its presence" (p. 33).

Self-esteem is not a unitary dimension. Individuals may view themselves differently across various areas. In addition to a total score, the "Piers-Harris" provides six "cluster scales." When calculating cluster scale scores, some items are scored in more than one scale, while others used to calculate the total score are not included in any cluster scale. Therefore, it is possible for a student whose total scores on both the pre and postimplementation instruments are similar to have cluster scores on the two instruments which are quite varied. Since the cluster scales are based on a relatively few items, and

a single raw score difference can result in a disproportionate discrepancy in the T-scores, the authors recommend the use of stanines when comparing cluster scores.

While the successful attainment of the second objective was not based on increases in the means of the six cluster scales of the "Piers-Harris," significant increases in the mean scores of all six areas did occur. The Behavior Cluster (BEH) indicates the extent to which the students admit or deny problematic behaviors. The mean stanine score on the preimplementation instrument was 5.54. The mean postimplementation score was 6.41, an improvement of 0.87 which is an increase of 15.70%.

The Intellectual and School Status Cluster (INT) reflects the students' self assessment of their intellectual and academic tasks as well as general satisfaction with school and future expectations. The preimplementation mean stanine score was 5.28. The postimplementation mean was 6.34, a gain of 1.06, which is an increase of 20.08%.

The Physical Appearance and Attributes Cluster (PHY) deals with the student's attitudes regarding his or her physical characteristics, as well as leadership and the ability to express ideas. The mean stanine

score on the preimplementation instrument was 5.87, while the postimplementation mean was 7.17. The improvement of 1.30 is an increase of 22.15%.

The Anxiety Cluster (ANX) reflects the students' general emotional disturbance and dysphoric mood. Cluster items deal with a variety of emotions such as worry, fear, shyness, nervousness, sadness, and a feeling of being left out of things. The mean stanine score on the preimplementation scale was 5.15. The mean of the postimplementation scale was 6.18, an increase of 1.03, or 20.00%.

The Popularity Cluster (POP) reveals the students' evaluation of his or her popularity with classmates, being chosen for games and activities, and the ability to make friends. The preimplementation mean stanine score was 5.30, and the postimplementation mean stanine score was 6.01. The improvement of 0.71, was an increase of 13.40%.

The Happiness and Satisfaction Cluster (HAP) deals with the student's general feeling of being a happy person easy to get along with, and generally content with life. The preimplementation mean stanine score was 5.25. The average postimplementation score was 6.39, a gain of 1.14, which is an increase of 21.71%. Table 2 summarizes the mean cluster scores on the pre and

postimplementation instruments. Appendix F lists the students' cluster scores on both instruments.

Table 2

Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale
Mean Stanine Cluster Scores

Cluster	Pre Practicum Score	Post Practicum Score	Amount of Change	Percent of Change
BEH	5.54	6.41	0.87	15.70
INT	5.28	6.34	1.06	20.08
PHY	5.87	7.17	1.30	22.15
ANX	5.15	6.18	1.03	20.00
POP	5.30	6.01	0.71	13.40
HAP	5.25	6.39	1.14	21.71

The third objective of the practicum dealt with the eighth grade students decreasing the number of less than satisfactory grades and checks for poor work and social habits on their report cards. A 20% decrease over the 30 week period of the practicum, as compared to the comparable period of time of the previous year, was the criterion for success.

Eight upper grade teachers were involved in the effort to reduce the number of less than satisfactory grades and checks. The writer deliberately did not

inform them of the 20% reduction criterion for success so as not to influence their evaluations of the students. The number of less than satisfactory grades was reduced from 362 during the first 30 weeks of the previous year to 285 during the practicum, a reduction of 77 or 22.76%. Table 3 summarizes the results.

The total number of checks was reduced from 1030 to 792, a reduction of 238 or 23.11%. The number of checks for social habits was reduced from 295 to 211, a difference of 84 or 28.47%. Table 4 summarizes these results. The number of checks for work habits was reduced from 735 to 581, a reduction of 154, or 20.95%. Table 5 summarizes these results. Thus, the success criterion for objective three was attained.

The importance of parental involvement in the education of their children is well-documented. The fourth objective of the practicum was for the writer to personally contact at least 80% of the eighth grade students' parents three or more times during the course of the 30 week practicum. The objective was realized. The writer was successful in contacting all the parents at least the required number of times. The parents were particularly pleased to be contacted when there was something positive to report about their children. However, the only contact with four parents was via

Table 3
Less Than Satisfactory Grades

Student No.	School Year 87/88	School Year 87/88	Amount of Change
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	3	1	-2
4	5	3	-2
5	0	0	0
6	3	0	-3
7	2	2	0
8	1	1	0
9	3	3	0
10	19	9	-10
11	3	3	0
12	5	8	+3
13	6	3	-3
14	0	0	0
15	20	13	-7
16	2	2	0
17	0	0	0
18	4	5	+1
19	1	0	-1
20	0	0	0
21	10	8	-2
22	6	12	+6
23	1	0	-1
24	9	5	-4
25	10	10	0
26	1	3	+2
27	18	9	-9
28	3	1	-2
29	0	0	0
30	18	14	-4
31	22	18	-4
32	6	3	-3
33	3	1	-2
34	4	3	-1
35	0	0	0
36	0	0	0
37	3	3	0
38	3	1	-2
39	12	16	+4
40	2	0	-2
41	7	1	-6
42	7	2	-5

Table 3
Less Than Satisfactory Grades

Student No.	School Year 87/88	School Year 88/89	Amount of Change
43	2	1	-1
44	2	12	+10
45	10	12	+2
46	8	8	0
47	0	0	0
48	1	0	-1
49	0	0	0
50	26	19	-7
51	1	0	-1
52	0	0	0
53	2	0	-2
54	3	3	0
55	2	7	+5
56	1	0	-1
57	17	17	0
58	3	8	+5
59	7	1	-6
60	0	0	0
61	2	0	-2
62	0	0	0
63	13	9	-4
64	1	5	+4
65	1	0	-1
66	11	7	-4
67	7	0	-7
68	13	5	-8
69	0	0	0
70	2	0	-2
71	5	8	+3
Totals	362	285	77
Means	5.10	4.01	
Medians	3.00	2.00	
Percent reduction in Unsatisfactory Grades			22.76

Table 4
Checks for Social Habits

Student No.	School Year 87/88	School Year 88/89	Amount of Change
1	0	0	0
2	1	0	-1
3	0	0	0
4	2	1	-1
5	5	13	+8
6	1	0	-1
7	1	0	-1
8	7	6	-1
9	4	7	+3
10	15	15	0
11	2	0	-2
12	2	0	-2
13	0	5	+5
14	0	0	0
15	11	6	-5
16	13	18	+5
17	0	0	0
18	2	2	0
19	0	0	0
20	0	0	0
21	1	0	-1
22	16	14	-2
23	1	0	-1
24	3	1	-2
25	0	0	0
26	0	0	0
27	6	2	-4
28	1	0	-1
29	0	0	0
30	9	1	-8
31	16	12	-4
32	1	0	-1
33	4	6	+2
34	4	1	-3
35	0	0	0
36	0	0	0
37	5	2	-3
38	4	4	0
39	4	7	+3
40	0	0	0
41	0	0	0
42	0	0	0

Table 4
Checks for Social Habits

Student No.	School Year 87/88	School Year 88/89	Amount of Change
43	0	0	0
44	0	0	0
45	23	11	-12
46	10	12	+2
47	1	0	-1
48	10	6	-4
49	0	0	0
50	15	13	-2
51	2	1	-1
52	0	0	0
53	13	3	-10
54	10	6	-4
55	1	1	0
56	0	0	0
57	15	3	-12
58	12	11	-1
59	13	8	-5
60	0	0	0
61	2	1	-1
62	0	0	0
63	2	4	+2
64	2	0	-2
65	2	2	0
66	5	1	-4
67	0	0	0
68	8	4	-4
69	0	0	0
70	0	0	0
71	8	1	-7
Totals	295	211	-84
Means	4.15	2.97	
Medians	2.00	1.00	

Percent reduction in checks for Social Habits 28.47

Table 5
Checks for Work Habits

Student No.	School Year 87/88	School Year 88/89	Amount of Change
1	2	2	0
2	3	2	-1
3	5	4	-1
4	7	6	-1
5	6	8	+2
6	8	0	-8
7	11	6	-5
8	8	7	-1
9	11	6	-5
10	26	22	-4
11	8	5	-3
12	8	11	+3
13	4	3	-1
14	0	0	0
15	32	13	-19
16	8	15	+7
17	0	0	0
18	7	8	+1
19	4	3	-1
20	4	1	-3
21	15	9	-6
22	22	27	+5
23	6	3	-3
24	9	7	-2
25	13	11	-2
26	9	6	-3
27	26	18	-8
28	7	4	-3
29	1	2	+1
30	38	33	-5
31	24	29	+5
32	5	5	0
33	4	3	-1
34	4	4	0
35	0	0	0
36	2	0	-2
37	11	10	-1
38	4	7	+3
39	16	22	+6
40	2	0	-2
41	13	1	-12
42	13	9	-4

Table 5
Checks for Work Habits

Student No.	School Year 87/88	School Year 88/89	Amount of Change
43	3	2	-1
44	3	8	+5
45	35	30	-5
46	13	15	+2
47	2	6	+4
48	11	5	-6
49	0	0	0
50	33	31	-2
51	7	5	-2
52	0	0	0
53	11	1	-10
54	5	4	-1
55	11	10	-1
56	2	2	0
57	32	22	-10
58	22	29	+7
59	20	5	-15
60	0	0	0
61	8	10	+2
62	4	3	-1
63	11	13	+2
64	5	3	-2
65	5	5	0
66	29	9	-20
67	9	0	-9
68	20	14	-6
69	0	0	0
70	6	3	-3
71	22	14	-8
Totals	735	581	-154
Means	10.35	8.18	
Medians	8.00	5.00	
Percent reduction for Work Habits			20.95

letter. Efforts to meet with them or speak with them via telephone were continually frustrated. The writer recorded the dates and methods of parent contact. While most of the parents were contacted more than the required three times, for the purpose of the practicum report only three contacts are listed in Appendix G for each student.

During the course of the practicum the writer observed many changes in the behavior of the students. They were able to get-along with others and perform better in various social situations and the classroom. More importantly, the students began to seek-out the writer and some of the teachers to air their feelings and seek advice.

Conclusions

Generally, studies have supported the hypothesis that enhanced self-esteem leads to improved academic performance, social competence, and self-discipline. The results of this practicum support the use of group counseling to enhance self-esteem and reduce the number of incidences of maladaptive behavior. The students as a group were able to transfer the positive alternatives

to school and social problems discussed in counseling classes to the regular classroom.

The school/parent partnership in the education of children played an important part in the success of this practicum. Although parent participation in school functions tends to diminish as children advance through the elementary school grades, most parents will become involved once again if the school is willing to make a determined effort to reestablish contact.

Parents were particularly pleased to be contacted when there was something positive to report about their children. Prior to the start of the practicum, the writer thought the fourth objective would be the most difficult to attain. By seeking-out parents at all school functions and some neighborhood events, the writer was able to attain the fourth objective. There were some parents, primarily those of children who were bused to the school from outside the school's immediate attendance area, the writer had to contact mainly by phone. Unfortunately there were four students whose parents could not be contacted any other way except by letter. The fact that the students involved in the practicum will graduate in June made it somewhat easier for the writer to get parent involvement.

All teachers and counselors should be given

in-service training in the use of group counseling techniques to improve student self-esteem and reduce maladaptive behavior. Trained counselors should act as consultants to the rest of the staff.

Counseling sessions should be available for all students, not just those students who may be experiencing difficulty. Actual group size should be limited to eight to ten students and time for meetings should be provided as part of the regular school day. A structured program should be initiated by the time the students are in the intermediate grades.

The writer is aware that there were intervening variables that affected the students' performances. Maturation, positive role models, and constructive home activities undoubtedly had a positive effect on some students' performances. Conversely, negative peer pressure, gang involvement, the disintegration of families, and substance abuse had adverse effects on some of the students involved in the practicum.

Recommendations

When replicating the practicum with sophisticated students who tend to score highly on both the pre and

postimplementation administrations of the Piers-Harris Scale, the writer would use percentile scores as the basis of comparison to determine the degree of improvement in the students' self-esteem. The writer would also employ an additional instrument to measure the students' self-esteem. Constructing one's own instrument would be best when working with groups that are highly sophisticated and may differ somewhat from the norming group used by Piers and Harris. Field testing of all instruments is necessary.

Counseling sessions should be held more than once a week. A week between sessions is too long when the students are involved with topics they are interested in and of immediate value to them. The counselor must capitalize on the interests of the students and not be bound to a rigid lesson plan.

The size of the groups should not exceed eight to ten students. Sessions should not be held the last period of the day nor held in place of a scheduled study period.

Disciplinary actions must be administered quickly and consistently by all staff members involved with the students. Students accept the consequences of their actions more readily if they understand the rationale behind the disciplinary action. Students repeatedly

having difficulties should be referred for individual counseling. All the teachers should receive in-service training in group counseling techniques. Developmental counseling programs should begin in the intermediate grades.

Guest speakers should be utilized to cover specialized areas of study. The school nurse can give more in-depth coverage of topics such as AIDS, hygiene, and communicable diseases. A grooming expert can give helpful hints on clothing and makeup. High school and college students, as well as representatives from industry, can speak of the attributes needed to succeed in higher education and various careers.

Dissemination

The results of this practicum will be shared with the administration, staff, local school council, and community organizations serving the school in which it took place. A copy of the practicum report will be made available in the teacher reference section of the school library.

The report will be shared with the administration

and staff of the writer's school district. A copy of the report will be presented to the Coordinator of Elementary School Guidance and Personnel Services for the Chicago Public Schools.

The practicum report will be presented to the Chicago Guidance and Personnel Association which serves the Chicago Metropolitan Area, and to the School of Education of De Paul University. The report will also be shared with the writer's cluster members who are active in various areas of education in an eight-state area.

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APPENDIX A

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Discipline Referrals and
Unsatisfactory Report Card Grades and Checks

Student Number	Discipline Referrals	Less Than Satisfactory Grades	Social Habits Checks	Work Habits Checks
1	0	0	0	2
2	0	0	1	3
3	0	3	0	5
4	5	5	2	7
5	5	0	5	6
6	1	3	1	8
7	4	2	1	11
8	5	1	7	8
9	8	3	4	11
10	14	19	15	26
11	3	3	2	8
12	1	5	2	8
13	0	6	0	4
14	4	0	0	0
15	14	20	11	32
16	9	2	13	8
17	0	0	0	0
18	5	4	2	7
19	2	1	0	4
20	0	0	0	4
21	0	10	1	15
22	13	6	16	22
23	0	1	1	6
24	3	9	3	9
25	4	10	0	13
26	0	1	0	9
27	5	18	6	26
28	1	3	1	7
29	3	0	0	1
30	13	18	9	38
31	5	22	16	24
32	1	6	1	5
33	7	3	4	4
34	5	4	4	4
35	0	0	0	0
36	0	0	0	2
37	2	3	5	11
38	1	3	4	4
39	4	12	4	16
40	0	2	0	2
41	2	7	0	13
42	3	7	0	13

Discipline Referrals and
Unsatisfactory Report Card Grades and Checks

Student Number	Discipline Referrals	Less Than Satisfactory Grades	Social Habits Checks	Work Habits Checks
43	0	2	0	3
44	3	2	0	3
45	10	10	23	35
46	12	8	10	13
47	1	0	1	2
48	2	1	10	11
49	0	0	0	0
50	11	26	15	33
51	3	1	2	7
52	0	0	0	0
53	6	2	13	11
54	3	3	10	5
55	0	2	1	11
56	1	1	0	2
57	0	17	15	32
58	1	3	12	22
59	3	7	13	20
60	3	0	0	0
61	4	2	2	8
62	3	0	0	4
63	1	13	2	11
64	3	1	2	5
65	4	1	2	5
66	6	11	5	29
67	3	7	0	9
68	3	13	8	20
69	1	0	0	0
70	0	2	0	6
71	3	5	8	22
Totals	242	362	295	735
Means	3.41	5.10	4.15	10.35
Medians	3.00	3.00	2.00	8.00

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE LOG SHEET

Room _____ Week _____

Successful Activities:

Unsuccessful Activities:

Student Concerns:

Teacher Concerns:

APPENDIX C

LETTER ANNOUNCING PROGRAM

SCHOOL

Ave.

Chicago, IL 606

Dear Parents of Prospective Graduates:

The eighth grade students will be involved in a group counseling program designed to help them improve their social and academic skills and ease their transition into high school. Study areas will include attitudes, self-esteem, interpersonal relations, values, self-discipline, and career interests as well as high school and college entrance requirements.

The importance of parental involvement in the education of their children can not be overemphasized. Increased parent contact is part of the program. There will be supplemental reports in addition to the regular report card. Parents are encouraged to contact their child's teachers and counselor on a regular basis or whenever a question may arise.

Sincerely,

Norbert T. Bunish

Norbert T. Bunish

Counselor

APPENDIX D

SUPPLEMENTAL PROGRESS REPORT

Name

ID Number Grade Room

GROWTH IN KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND UNDERSTANDINGS

The following marking codes will be used to report your child's achievement.

A - Excellent
B - Good
C - Satisfactory
D - Needs improvement
F - Unsatisfactory
[/] - Indicates an area not to be marked at this time

Each mark represents your child's achievement for one 10-week reporting period. An average mark of the four marks is recorded at the end of the school year in the column headed FINAL.

The instructional level in reading is the grade level at which your child is performing and being taught in the basal reader. This instructional level may differ from the assigned grade.

	ACHIEVEMENT				
	1	2	3	4	FINAL
READING IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE					
Instructional Level					
Your child's reading level is below grade level, at grade level, or above grade level.	below / at / above	below / at / above	below / at / above	below / at / above	below / at / above
READING IN THE NATIVE LANGUAGE					
Instructional Level					
Your child's reading level is below grade level, at grade level, or above grade level.	below / at / above	below / at / above	below / at / above	below / at / above	below / at / above
ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL)					
Reading					
Writing					
Listening					
Speaking					
LANGUAGE ARTS or NATIVE LANGUAGE ARTS					
Oral Expression					
Written Expression					
Spelling					
Handwriting					
MATHEMATICS					
SCIENCE					
SOCIAL STUDIES					
ART					
MUSIC					
HEALTH and SAFETY EDUCATION					
PHYSICAL EDUCATION					
LIBRARY SKILLS					

GROWTH IN HABITS AND ATTITUDES

A student must show progress in social, work, and health and safety habits to gain the greatest benefit from the school program. [/] means that your child needs to improve.

SOCIAL HABITS	REPORTING PERIODS 1	2	3	4
Exercises self-control				
Accepts responsibility				
Obeys school rules and regulations				
Plays well alone and in a group				
Respects rights and property of others	/			
WORK HABITS				
Comes prepared to work				
Listens well				
Follows directions				
Works independently and in a group				
Takes part in class activities				
Cares for materials				
Completes assigned classroom work				
Does homework assignments				
Puts forth effort				
HEALTH AND SAFETY HABITS				
Practices good health habits				
Obeys safety rules				

ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance and promptness are necessary for successful progress in school. A note dated and signed by the parent or guardian is required each time a student is absent or is tardy.

REPORTING PERIODS	1	2	3	4	TOTAL
Days Absent					
Times Tardy					

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

APPENDIX E

TOTAL SCORE T-SCORES

Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale
Total Score T-Scores

Student No.	Pre Practicum Score	Post Practicum Score	Amount of Change	Percent of Change
1	57	65	8	14.04
2	59	62	3	5.08
3	49	49	0	0.0
4	62	65	3	4.84
5	55	60	5	9.09
6	62	68	6	9.68
7	68	65	-3	-4.41
8	56	56	0	0.0
9	60	77	17	28.23
10	54	51	-3	-5.56
11	63	79	16	25.40
12	48	52	4	8.33
13	48	55	7	14.58
14	53	61	8	15.09
15	66	65	-1	-1.52
16	69	67	-2	-2.90
17	59	58	-1	-1.69
18	67	74	7	10.45
19	61	69	8	13.11
20	54	60	6	11.11
21	52	57	5	9.62
22	49	52	3	6.12
23	67	74	7	10.45
24	59	59	0	0.0
25	56	61	5	8.93
26	55	56	1	1.82
27	50	56	6	12.00
28	62	69	7	11.29
29	68	70	2	2.94
30	36	45	9	25.00
31	58	70	12	20.69
32	56	63	7	12.50
33	70	74	4	5.71
34	69	74	5	7.25
35	40	40	0	0.0
36	48	66	18	37.50
37	79	74	-5	-6.33
38	59	65	6	10.17
39	43	66	23	53.49
40	53	61	8	15.09
41	58	59	1	1.72

Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale
Total Score T-Scores

Student No.	Pre Practicum Score	Post Practicum Score	Amount of Change	Percent of Change
42	63	65	2	3.17
43	45	53	8	17.78
44	48	60	12	25.00
45	51	68	17	33.33
46	62	62	0	0.0
47	37	43	6	16.22
48	59	58	-1	-1.69
49	42	43	1	2.38
50	45	65	20	44.44
51	51	58	7	13.73
52	53	70	17	32.08
53	43	46	3	6.98
54	51	53	2	3.92
55	51	48	-3	-5.88
56	60	67	7	11.67
57	56	57	1	1.79
58	56	62	6	10.71
59	58	55	-3	-5.17
60	68	67	-1	-1.47
61	70	79	9	12.86
62	55	58	3	5.45
63	47	57	10	21.28
64	61	65	4	6.56
65	54	56	2	3.70
66	53	58	5	9.43
67	48	66	18	37.50
68	67	70	3	4.48
69	46	62	16	34.78
70	51	57	6	11.76
71	52	60	8	15.38
Totals	3960	4357	396	10.03
Means	**55.77**	**61.37**	**5.60**	10.04
Medians	56	61	5	8.93

APPENDIX F

INDIVIDUAL CLUSTER SCORE STANINES

Piers-Harris Scale Individual Cluster Scores
Pre (P) and Posttest (T) Stanines

Student	Cluster Numbers											
	I		II		III		IV		V		VI	
No.	P	T	P	T	P	T	P	T	P	T	P	T
1	6	7	6	7	5	7	4	5	3	6	5	8
2	7	7	7	8	8	8	5	7	4	6	5	8
3	8	4	5	4	5	8	1	3	4	5	4	8
4	6	7	4	5	7	9	7	5	7	5	6	8
5	4	5	5	8	6	7	8	7	5	7	5	5
6	6	8	6	9	8	9	4	5	4	4	8	8
7	7	8	6	4	9	8	6	7	7	7	8	8
8	5	4	5	5	8	8	6	6	6	7	5	5
9	7	8	7	9	8	9	3	9	4	7	6	8
10	3	6	4	5	8	7	8	4	6	3	8	5
11	4	6	6	9	8	9	8	9	7	7	6	8
12	2	4	5	5	8	9	5	5	6	6	5	5
13	4	4	6	5	8	9	5	5	4	5	5	8
14	4	8	5	7	6	8	6	6	4	7	5	8
15	4	5	7	6	8	8	8	8	9	9	8	8
16	5	4	8	6	9	9	9	9	7	7	8	6
17	8	8	6	8	5	5	4	5	5	7	5	5
18	7	8	5	9	9	9	7	7	7	6	5	8
19	8	7	9	7	5	9	5	8	6	7	6	8
20	7	7	5	6	6	9	3	5	4	6	5	5
21	4	7	3	4	4	7	4	4	4	9	5	6
22	4	4	4	4	3	5	5	7	6	6	2	3
23	8	7	8	9	5	8	8	9	6	6	8	8
24	7	7	5	5	8	8	4	6	7	6	6	8
25	8	7	4	7	2	7	7	8	6	6	5	6
26	6	7	5	5	5	7	4	5	6	7	5	8
27	2	4	4	5	5	7	5	5	6	7	4	5
28	8	7	5	8	5	9	9	9	5	7	8	8
29	7	7	9	9	8	8	8	8	7	7	8	8
30	3	4	3	4	2	2	2	5	1	2	3	5
31	5	8	5	7	9	9	5	9	4	7	6	6
32	5	6	4	7	8	7	5	7	7	5	5	5
33	8	7	8	8	8	9	9	9	6	9	8	8
34	8	8	7	9	9	9	9	9	9	7	8	8
35	6	7	5	6	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
36	4	8	5	7	5	8	5	6	3	6	3	8
37	7	7	8	9	9	9	7	8	7	5	8	8
38	6	8	4	8	6	7	6	7	6	6	5	8
39	3	8	5	5	4	9	3	6	3	9	1	6
40	5	7	5	7	3	4	3	5	6	6	4	6

Piers-Harris Scale Individual Cluster Scores
Pre (P) and Posttest (T) Stanines

Student	Cluster Numbers											
	I		II		III		IV		V		VI	
No.	P	T	P	T	P	T	P	T	P	T	P	T
41	4	5	5	5	8	8	4	5	7	6	8	6
42	5	7	7	6	8	8	6	7	9	9	8	6
43	7	8	5	5	1	4	2	5	1	2	2	6
44	4	7	4	4	4	8	5	5	4	5	4	8
45	6	7	2	7	4	7	4	8	6	7	3	8
46	6	7	6	7	7	5	7	9	6	7	6	6
47	4	4	2	4	2	2	2	2	2	3	1	1
48	4	4	6	5	4	5	6	7	9	7	4	1
49	4	7	4	5	2	4	6	2	3	2	3	2
50	4	8	4	6	4	9	2	4	3	5	4	8
51	4	7	6	5	8	7	2	4	5	6	6	8
52	8	8	5	8	5	9	5	8	5	7	2	8
53	2	4	4	4	5	5	3	2	6	5	2	1
54	5	5	2	4	1	1	7	7	5	4	5	5
55	4	3	5	4	4	5	6	5	7	3	5	6
56	8	7	6	9	7	8	7	8	7	7	4	6
57	4	4	4	5	6	7	7	7	7	7	6	5
58	4	6	5	5	8	9	4	6	7	9	6	8
59	4	4	5	6	8	6	5	6	6	6	8	6
60	8	7	7	7	8	8	6	7	6	7	8	8
61	8	8	8	9	8	9	8	9	7	7	6	8
62	7	7	5	7	4	4	7	7	5	4	6	6
63	8	6	4	4	4	5	2	7	2	7	6	4
64	5	7	5	6	8	9	5	6	5	9	8	8
65	5	6	7	7	7	7	3	5	6	6	6	6
66	6	8	4	7	5	8	3	3	4	4	3	3
67	7	7	4	7	4	8	2	9	1	4	5	8
68	7	8	7	7	8	9	6	5	6	7	6	8
69	7	8	5	7	1	5	4	6	2	6	1	8
70	7	7	4	6	5	7	2	4	3	5	4	5
71	1	4	4	8	8	9	7	6	8	6	6	8

APPENDIX G

PARENT CONTACTS

Parent Contacts

P=Personal Contact PH=Phone L=Letter

Student No.	First Contact & Method	Second Contact & Method	Third Contact & Method
1	11/03 P	11/11 P	12/21 P
2	11/16 P	03/07 PH	03/29 P
3	11/03 P	12/20 L	04/12 PH
4	11/16 P	12/21 L	04/12 P
5	09/27 P	10/31 PH	03/07 P
6	11/16 L	02/14 L	03/27 L
7	09/07 P	10/31 PH	11/20 PH
8	09/07 PH	09/23 PH	04/12 P
9	09/14 PH	10/21 P	12/02 P
10	09/30 P	11/16 P	04/12 P
11	10/20 P	11/15 P	02/22 P
12	11/16 P	10/24 P	04/12 P
13	10/17 L	11/16 L	03/27 L
14	10/07 P	11/16 P	03/29 P
15	10/21 P	11/10 P	01/17 P
16	10/08 P	10/31 P	04/12 P
17	11/03 P	12/21 L	01/11 P
18	12/16 P	02/20 PH	03/29 P
19	11/16 P	10/12 PH	01/26 P
20	09/07 P	09/15 P	10/08 P
21	11/03 P	12/08 P	03/29 P
22	10/24 PH	11/29 P	03/03 P
23	11/16 P	12/08 P	04/12 P
24	10/10 PH	12/21 L	04/12 P
25	11/03 P	11/16 P	01/17 P
26	10/17 P	11/03 P	12/08 PH
27	10/07 PH	12/21 L	02/20 L
28	10/07 P	10/31 P	12/07 PH
29	09/30 P	11/16 P	12/19 P
30	09/07 P	12/20 P	03/29 P
31	11/03 P	12/08 P	02/10 PH
32	11/16 P	12/21PH	03/29 P
33	11/03 PH	12/20 P	02/08 P
34	11/16 P	12/21 L	03/21 P
35	09/07 P	10/14 P	10/24 P
36	11/03 P	02/22 PH	03/29 L
37	09/26 P	10/03 P	12/02 P
38	09/07 P	09/21 P	10/20 P
39	11/16 P	12/21 L	03/27 PH
40	09/07 P	09/12 P	09/14 P

Parent Contacts

P=Personal Contact PH=Phone L=Letter

Student No.	First Contact & Method	Second Contact & Method	Third Contact & Method
41	11/03 L	12/21 L	03/29 L
42	10/27 PH	02/06 P	03/10 P
43	12/01 P	02/08 P	03/29 P
44	12/08 PH	12/16 P	03/07 L
45	09/21 PH	10/17 PH	12/23 P
46	10/31 PH	01/09 P	12/19 P
47	11/16 P	03/16 PH	03/21 P
48	11/16 P	12/21 P	01/31 P
49	11/03 P	11/16 P	03/29 P
50	10/31 PH	11/23 P	12/21 L
51	10/20 PH	11/16 P	02/21 PH
52	11/03 P	12/07 PH	12/23 P
53	10/24 PH	11/16 P	12/08 PH
54	11/02 PH	02/22 L	03/27 PH
55	10/17 P	11/03 P	03/29 P
56	10/03 P	11/10 P	12/08 PH
57	11/16 L	12/21 L	03/29 P
58	11/16 P	12/19 P	03/29 P
59	10/07 PH	12/21 L	02/22 PH
60	09/30 P	11/03 P	11/16 P
61	10/26 P	11/03 P	12/20 PH
62	11/16 P	02/22 PH	03/29 P
63	09/27 P	11/03 P	11/16 P
64	11/16 P	12/21 L	03/29 P
65	10/03 P	02/06 PH	03/29 P
66	11/06 P	03/20 P	03/29 P
67	11/09 P	11/16 P	02/08 P
68	12/20 PH	01/09 P	02/06 P
69	09/15 P	10/06 PH	12/22 P
70	10/03 P	11/03 P	12/01 P
71	12/21 L	02/08 L	03/27 L

APPENDIX H

WEEKLY LOG SUMMARIES

Week One:

Had to reorganize the counseling groups that were set up before school began. Several students who took transfers in June did not actually leave the school, while others who said they were returning did transfer. This made it necessary to rework all the statistics documenting the problem. New eighth grade students who did not attend the school last year had to be accommodated. They will take part in the sessions but will not be included in the report. All the upper grade teachers are very cooperative and willing to take part in a program designed to improve discipline and create a better learning environment. Having to work around an existing departmental schedule made it necessary to form larger groups than the writer would have liked and hold most of the sessions the last period of the day when many of the students would have had a "free" study period.

Week Two:

Many teachers were absent due to religious holidays. Shortage of substitutes forced the writer to cover classes. Fortunately, the classes covered were eighth grade departmental classes and the writer was able to continue with the counseling program.

Week Three:

A few students are having difficulty adapting to the counseling classes. However, most of the students have adapted to the program and look forward to the meetings.

Week Four:

No unusual concerns or problems.

Week Five:

A scheduling change made the room we were using no longer available. Lack of suitable space made it necessary to move the sessions to the writer's office. While the room is quite large, adequate furniture was not available. Chairs and desks had to be moved in and out with each group until sufficient furniture was secured. Fortunately this only lasted one week, but this had an adverse effect on several students.

Week Six:

Had to reschedule one group due to a school holiday this week. No problem with the teacher involved as my taking the students gave him an additional "free" period. Future holidays will be handled in the same manner.

Week Seven:

No unusual concerns or problems.

Week Eight:

School open house, evening session, allowed the

writer to address many parents of upper grade students. The writer and upper grade teachers were able to discuss what we are doing and answer questions.

Week Nine:

No unusual concerns or problems.

Week Ten:

Spoke to many parents during the course of mandatory report card pick up day. There are still a few parents we have been unable to contact even though the student's report card will not be sent home until the parent comes into or contacts the school.

Week Eleven:

No unusual concerns or problems.

Week Twelve:

No unusual concerns or problems.

Week Thirteen:

No unusual concerns or problems.

Week Fourteen:

No unusual concerns or problems.

Week Fifteen:

No unusual concerns or problems.

Week Sixteen:

No unusual concerns or problems.

Week Seventeen:

Students returned after a two-week Christmas

vacation. A few of the students had some difficulty resuming the program, but most of the students picked up right where we left off with little or no difficulty.

Week Eighteen:

No unusual concerns or problems.

Week Nineteen:

No unusual concerns or problems.

Week Twenty:

Had to reschedule classes due to an injury to the writer which kept him out of school for three days.

Week Twenty-One:

No unusual concerns or problems.

Week Twenty-Two:

No unusual concerns or problems.

Week Twenty-Three:

One of the building administrators went on sick leave. The writer had to assume some additional duties and reschedule some counseling sessions.

Week Twenty-Four:

No unusual concerns or problems.

Week Twenty-Five:

No unusual concerns or problems.

Week Twenty-Six:

No unusual concerns or problems.

Week Twenty-Seven:

No unusual concerns or problems.

Week Twenty-Eight:

No unusual concerns or problems.

Week Twenty-Nine:

No unusual concerns or problems.

Week Thirty:

No unusual concerns or problems.